

Byrd, Michelle Lewandowski, Nicole Ortiz, Heather Kvale, Holly Mohon, Shauna Rasor, and Ji-Youn Yeo.

Not many hospitals have a molecular department, but UPMC does. Thanks to the work of these highly trained women specialists, and the UPMC lab capabilities, COVID-19 testing was made available for our entire region and results dropped from an 8 day wait period to just 48 hours. And the lab is poised to invent even better results with the research funds Congress has passed.

These swift test results have had a priceless impact on the lives of people in our community. Quick test results help us identify sick patients, get them the care they need, and prevent further spread. Their work brings our community great pride in their accomplishments at the precious labs of UPMC. I will continue to support their efforts at UPMC as the country works to ratchet up production and make widespread testing more available.

In the difficult circumstances Americans find ourselves in, hope must not be forgotten. The rays of hope we see in our researchers and caregivers' dedication to heal and find solutions to this virus serve as a reminder of the resiliency of our community and the strength of America as a whole in an interdependent world. Today, America thanks you—the Toledo Rocket women of science—who helped bring testing to our region. To quote Abraham Lincoln—you are "the better angels of our nature."

[From the Blade, Apr. 1, 2020]

HOW UPMC SPECIALISTS WORKED SWIFTLY TO BRING CORONAVIRUS TESTING TO AREA

(By Brooks Sutherland)

Around the same time the United States reported its first case of coronavirus, molecular specialists at the University of Toledo Medical Center had already begun discussions to bring in-house testing capabilities to its pathology lab.

It was that foresight that paved the way for coronavirus testing capabilities at UPMC, the former Medical College of Ohio hospital, under a U.S. Food and Drug Administration Emergency Use Authorization, to sprout in just weeks.

Testing in Lucas County previously took up to eight days for results to finalize even as concerns around the global pandemic continued to heighten and the number of confirmed cases skyrocketed nationwide.

But today, the lab at UPMC can test up to 180 samples a day and returns take 48 hours or less. That quick turnaround is possible thanks to efforts from molecular specialists such as Ji-Youn Yeo and Heather Kvale and a handful of others at UPMC, according to Cynthia O'Connell, the administrative director of the medical center's pathology lab.

"We have a molecular department, and not many hospitals do," she said. "So we have a lot of specialists and they worked tirelessly to make this happen."

Understanding its impact during a health crisis, Ms. Kvale added: "We really wanted to bring this in house, so it would reduce the turnaround time for our patients."

"I'm really glad that we're able to decrease that time so that people don't sit there in limbo," she said.

But in order to bring testing capability to UPMC, the molecular diagnostics specialists had to validate a testing kit to show it was accurately providing results. Thankfully, the lab was already equipped with the correct machine and the kit before they became in short supply.

In order to validate testing, lab workers collaborated with Beaumont Health, which is

based in Royal Oak, Mich., and the Ohio Department of Health to gather known positive and negative specimens which were in turn used to test accuracy.

Ms. Yeo's expertise in molecular genetics then helped the lab modify the test to keep employees safe during the process, Ms. Kvale said. But that modification then had to be validated, she said.

"She's really brilliant," Ms. O'Connell added of Ms. Yeo.

Ms. Yeo declined to be interviewed, but in a prepared statement said members of the pathology team "worked fast together," to put all the pieces in place to bring testing to northwest Ohio.

Dr. James Willey, a UT professor who specializes in pulmonary medicine, said Ms. Yeo trained and performed her thesis in his National Institutes of Health-funded lab, where she learned lots of unique skill sets.

"I'm proud of all those guys," he said. "This is really important."

Dr. Thomas Blomquist, deputy coroner at the Lucas County Coroner's Office, helped set up the molecular diagnostics lab and hired Ms. Kvale and Ms. Yeo. He said the two "deserve a ton of credit," and said he was proud that the specialists were able to fend off any challenges that stood in the way of bringing testing to the area.

"Molecular testing is really critical for society," he said. "It allows people to have quick results so they can be quarantined as quick as possible to prevent the spread. This is going to have a huge impact."

HEROES IN THE WUHAN VIRUS PANDEMIC

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 23, 2020

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, in the midst of the national emergency being successfully faced by President Donald Trump and Vice President MIKE PENCE, there have been so many citizens stepping forward to help fellow neighbors in need. I am grateful to recognize heroes who are making a difference.

Journalist Kara Gormley Meador has initiated highlighting innovative citizens efforts to address the Wuhan Virus with former S.C. Revenue Director Burnie Maybank of the Nexsen-Pruett Law Firm. There is free streaming at www.buzzpodcast.com. The first conversation was with President Lou Kennedy of Nephron Pharmaceutical where she explained retooling her operation almost overnight to respond to the virus. She has been welcomed to the WVOC Radio in the Midlands with Gary David and Christopher Thompson.

Dale Hatchell and Elizabeth Burt of Lexington have organized Support a Nurse to provide "Light of Love" care kits to nurses on the front lines. These kits are donations of nutritional and immunity products with a support message helping the Dorn Veterans Administration Hospital, Lexington and Prisma hospitals, and Department of Juvenile Justice.

Talk radio host Kevin Cohen has been relentlessly providing important updates for the Midlands of South Carolina, fulfilling his goals on The POINT promoting charities and local events.

Halsey Cook, Chief Executive Officer of Milliken & Company of Spartanburg is continuing the visionary tradition of the late Roger

Milliken. Milliken & Company of Spartanburg is developing the manufacturing process for a new nanofiber with antiviral properties.

Scott Gottlieb of the American Enterprise Institute in The Wall Street Journal (April 12) has thoughtfully presented a plan to reopen the economy for jobs with companies diagnosing coronavirus cases in the workplace. He understands healthy citizens need a healthy economy.

Ambassador Andre Haspel of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has thoughtfully forwarded encouragement to members of the Congressional Caucus of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The alliance of the Netherlands and the United States is strong and appreciated to defeat the Wuhan Virus.

General Milford Beagle, Commander of Fort Jackson, with Army Chief of Staff Major General James McConville have been pro-active to protect the lives of new recruits and the dedicated personnel at Fort Jackson. The installation trains nearly 50 percent of all Soldiers and more than 60 percent of all women entering the Army each year.

Cecil Staton, President and CEO of the Asian American Hotel Owners of America, with Vice President Chirag Shah have worked tirelessly to promote the gruesomely impacted hospitality industry. AAHOA is the largest hotel owner's association in the world with 20,000 members owning half of hotels in America.

Walgreens Drug Stores with the dedicated staff in West Columbia is appreciated for featuring "Thanks to our frontline heroes". On Saturday, first responders, law enforcement, doctors and nurses will receive 30 percent off Walgreens brands and 20 percent off other brands. Drug stores, grocery stores, convenience stores and grocery stores, truckers, and other essential enterprises have been vital services for communities.

SAMANTHA LIEGGI

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 23, 2020

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Samantha Lieggi for receiving the Adams County Mayors and Commissioners Youth Award.

Samantha Lieggi is a 10th grader at Northglenn Middle School and received this award because her determination and hard work have allowed her to overcome adversities.

The dedication demonstrated by Samantha Lieggi is exemplary of the type of achievement that can be attained with hard work and perseverance. It is essential students at all levels strive to make the most of their education and develop a work ethic which will guide them for the rest of their lives.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Samantha Lieggi for winning the Adams County Mayors and Commissioners Youth Award. I have no doubt she will exhibit the same dedication and character in all of her future accomplishments.